DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 123 514 CG 010 546

AUTHOR Oegema, David N.
TITLE The Career Center - One Tool for Implementing Career Education.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Michigan Personnel and Guidance Association (Detroit, Michigan, November 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Choice; *Counseling Centers; *Delivery Systems; Employment Opportunities; Information Dissemination; *Occupational Guidance; *Occupational Information; *Resource Centers; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *Career Centers

ABSTRACT

A Career Center may be defined as an operational delivery system designed to provide students at the junior high, senior high, and adult levels with exposure to occupational, vocational, college and financial aid information. The Career Center provides the means to: disseminate career information, assess students' interests and abilities, incorporate information from the "world of work" into classroom instruction, develop study skills, and provide instruction on decision making. A shared delivery system is used to involve the student and resource personnel in the acquisition and use of occupational information and materials. The Career Center has been used for group test interpretation, student interest and aptitude testing, career exploration by classes, individual college or career exploration, military recruiting, and the CETA adult program. Additional uses of the Career Center include mini-courses offered through the counseling department, co-op student use in investigating local industry, additional classroom contact and use, and an adult career exploration course offered through the continuing education department. The career Center concept is undergoing continuous evaluation through formal and informal techniques. Formal evaluation techniques include student surveys, student use counts, and teacher surveys. (Author)

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ED123514

The Career Center - One Tool for Implementing Career Education

Osgema, David N. PhD, Counselor, Grand Haven High School

The State of Michigan (1975) has broadly defined Career Education as "The delivering of skills to all students which will provide them with the ability to explore, understand, and perform in their life roles while learning, working and living". Each school district in the state has the task of developing a plan for the implementation of Career Education into their own K-12 program. The Career Center represents one method of delivery for the Career Education concept.

A Career Center (Jacobson, 1972,1975; Rothi et al, 1975) may be defined as an operational delivery system designed to provide students at the junior high, senior high, and adult levels with exposure to occupational, vocational, college, and financial aid information. The Career Center provides the means to:

a. Disseminate career information
b. Assess student's interests and abilities
c. Incorporate information from the "world of work" into classroom instruction
d. Develop study skills
e. Provide instruction on decision

Purpose of a Career Center

The Grand Haven Counseling Department (Rothi et al, 1975) has identified the following purposes for a Career Center:

1. To provide an atmosphere conclusive to career exploration.
2. To provide the tools necessary for career exploration.
3. To have qualified personnel available to assist students in career exploration.
4. To encourage student responsibility for the acquisition and use of occupational information and materials.
5. To aid students in clarifying their personal values and relating these values to career choices.
6. To relate Career Center materials and activities to existing, ongoing programs within the school.
7. To assist students in seeing the relationship between the information in the Center and what they are studying in the classroom.
8. To make all the systems within the Center suitable for self-service, with assistance available when the student perceives the need for such help.
9. To promote student use by including students, teachers, counselors, parents and others in the planning and operation of the Center.
10. To provide delivery system for career counseling services to the school and adult community.

Description of a Career Center

The Grand Haven Career Center is a former classroom adjacent to the counseling offices. The Center is divided into four basic areas: (1) Career Information Displays; (2) College and Advanced Training Information;

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(3) Military Information and Careers; and (4) Audio-Visual Equipment and Library. All information in the Center can be easily located through an alphabetized Rolodex filing system. Information on the filing system has been duplicated and placed in the school library's filing system providing additional referral sources.

The Center functions most efficiently through the maintenance of an informal quiet atmosphere. The furnishings of the room adds to this atmosphere through the use of carpted floors and bean bag chairs. Round tables, file cabinets, traditional charis, display racks and tables complete the physical furnishings of the room.

The Center is operated jointly by the counselors and a career aide. A career aide is a para-professional responsible for assisting students, maintaining and orgainizing material and equipment, providing group orientation, and assisting teachers in coordinating career information and classroom activities. The career aide and voluntary student help are essential factors in the operation of a Center.

Materials in the Center

The Center contains an array of both commercial and locally produced materials including catalogs, applications, filmstrips, records, cassettes and pamphlets. The materials in the Center were collected and assembled from existing sources in the school, local community, industry, and governmental agencies without a large increase in budget. Display racks were obtained from a local carpet store and rebuilt for a nominal sum. The emphasis was on collecting and organizing the existing material in the system rather than spending a large sum of money to buy new material. A host of free or inexpensive materials are availabe for student use, the major problem at Grand Haven was the displaying and distribution of the materials on hand. The Center provided a central location for this synthesis to occur. Students are encouraged to take a copy of pamphlets for their own personal use.

The post-secondary area contains catalogs from all Michigan's two and four year, public and private colleges, vocational schools, art schools, nursing schools, and any other trade and technical information available. Catalogs from major universities throughout the nation are maintained, File cabinets and display racks contain applications, program descriptions, test information, and financial aid pamphlets all organized to allow for a shared delivery system between the student and resource personnel.

Each major military service maintains its own information display rack. Recruiters visit the school on a regular basis allowing the interested students to sign up in advance for appointments. Both military recruiters and college personnel find the Center a convenient and relaxing place for individual or small group meetings.

The audio-visual equipment and material provides for both individual and group presentat ons. Carrels are used for individual viewing, while black-out shades turn the entire room into a facility for group presentations. The filmstrips and cassette library covers such topics as study habits, working on the job, writing a resume, decision making, environmental careers (one of over a hundred), and selecting a post-secondary institution. The VIEW program from the State of Michigan is well received by the students due to its clarity and

specific information presented. It should be noted that the use of the VIEW program has at least tripled since being moved from a room off the library into the Career Center.

Uses of the Career Center

The Career Center is only a facility and does not become effective unless properly used. The Center must be a large enough facility to accomodate students, and materials and the Center must be conveniently located to allow for student, teacher, and counselor use anytime during the school day. The emphasis at Grand Haven has been placed on incorporating the Center into the counseling program and, in fact, making it a central part of the services provided. Each year all new students to the high school are acquainted with the counseling staff and the Center through an orientation program. The orientation provides an introduction to the counseling facility and invites students to make use of the counselor's expertise.

In addition to group orientation, students seen individually are frequently referred to the Center. Treatment programs for student concerns involving interpersonal relations, scholastic skills, or vocational decisions are frequently based on self-study modules available in the Center. Treatment programs are tailor made and completed at the students own pace.

The Center has been used for group test interpretation, student interest and aptitude testing, career exploration on both an individual and class basis, military recruiting, vocational exploration, and the post-high adult programs.

Future uses of the Center include mini-courses taught by counselors on career planning, slide programs on local factories and businesses, co-op student use in investigating local industry, additional classroom contact and use, and an adult career exploration course offered throug the continuing education department.

Summary

The potential for the Career Center at Grand Haven is viewed as unlimited. Recent attempts are under way to involve local business and industry in planning for the future of the Center. At this point in time two programs on local industries have been produced and available for student use as a direct result of the contacts made. The Career Center is a delivery system and offers a means to provide career education to the student body both efficiently and economically.

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